

A study on different dimensions of Bhil tribal community of Salrapada Village in Sailana Block of Ratlam District in Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract: Bhil is the major tribal group of Central India concentrated in the state of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. This study is addressing the social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental aspects of the bhil tribal ecosystem in the village of Salrapada. The study was conducted with the help of participative approaches, interview, and closed observations during a 40-day stay in the tribe community. The article discusses this discovery and the key findings of the research work. By exploring several aspects of their lives, including social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental, this study focuses on the ecosystem of the Bhil tribal people in the village of Salrapada. The article discusses this discovery and the study's top findings.

Key Words: Bhil, Tribe, Ecosystem, Paniya, Nyotra, Socio-economic, Poverty framework.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Indian Constitution was the first document to use the term "Scheduled Tribes." Scheduled tribes are those that are "those tribes or tribal communities or such sections of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution," according to Article 366 (25) of the Constitution. The procedure to be followed in the question of scheduling tribes is outlined in Article 342, which is reprinted below. In Central India, which includes Madhya Pradesh (14.69%), Chhattisgarh (7.5%), Jharkhand (8.29%), Andhra Pradesh (5.7%), Maharashtra (10.08%), Orissa (9.2%), Gujarat (8.55%), and Rajasthan (8.86%), more than half of the Scheduled Tribe population resides. The North East is another different region (Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh) In the tribal heritage of India Bhils have special identity and substantial contribution. They constitute about 15 per cent of the total tribal population. Bhils stands third in the population after Santhals and Gonds. Madhya Pradesh is the home of tribals. In this state Bhils stand second after Gonds. The Bhils concentration in the area of Ratlam, Dhar, Jhabua, Khargon Districts. The word 'Bhil', is the deform of 'Bhill' of Sanskrit language. This is originally related to Bhil-Bil-Bhande. In Sanskrit the word 'Bhill' is used for non-Aryans. The historical record available up to the end of 7th century does not give us appreciable account about the history culture and the life of Bhilalsuntill about A.D. 626. During the Maratha and British Bhils have seen very bad time. This report aims to explore the social structures and systems of Bhil tribe through a participatory approach, ensuring equal participation among members. To avoid biases and assumptions, a demographically matched group was invited to participate in the study. The tribe under investigation is the Bhil tribe, which is exclusively inhabited by ethnic Bhil people of the same caste, all of whom are Schedule Tribes. The report discusses the Bhil tribe's caste, clans, practices, marriage, and food habits. The Bhil people have their own deity, and each clan has its own temple. Marriage is an important component of their culture, and arranged marriages and romantic relationships are both accepted. The Bhil people's diet primarily consists of cereals and pulses, and they are a vegetarian group, with a few exceptions. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the Bhil tribe's social life, highlighting the tribe's unique cultural practices and beliefs.

2. METHOD:

The purpose of this study was to look into the five dimensions and system that exist within Bhil tribe. The researchers used participatory methodologies to gather data in a fair environment where everyone had an equal chance to engage. A group of persons with comparable demographics were gathered to participate in order to avoid biases or prejudices that could have an effect on the results.

3. DISCUSSION:

Language: The Bhils have a unique language that they call Bhili or Bhilodi. Although this language is spoken throughout the Bhil region, the pronunciation varies by region.

Caste: All of the settlements are inhabited exclusively by ethnic Bhil people who are descended from the same caste. All of them are Schedule Tribes.

Clan: Every society has clan. Hindus also observe a number of clans. Similarly the tribal groups also observe clan system. Eight prevalent Bhil Tribe clans, or ataks, have their ancestral home in the village. Maeda, Dodiya, Bhigara, Kharadi, Ninama, Bawar, Damore, and Wadakiya are among those mentioned. From the Mandi region of Dhar, Bawar flea came here. They think that the chief of their clan used to be in charge of them. The Salrapada people and the other tribe used to frequently fight, but now everything is quiet.

Practices: Among the Bhil tribe, each clan has its own deity. The god's temple is normally built in an open area with no shed. They build the temple using stones. With the help of red sindur, the glittering red and silver paper is attached to it (holy red powder). They cannot erect the temple on their own. The Bhil people believe that when a boy is younger, God appears to him. The entire body begins to shiver, and at that point, they keep on worshiping the stone as god while also contribute money among the clan and keeping the deity, who is typically a Naga or serpent god.



Figure 1: Village common temple

They must worship the god every Tuesday and Saturday, as well as offer incense sticks and crack a coconut in front of him occasionally. If a household animal becomes ill, they believe it is the result of an evil spirit entering its body, so they take a bath and perform some particular worship of Nag baba Jee or snake God, then sprinkle the water on the animal, and it miraculously recovers. It is also thought that if a couple does not have any children after marriage, they will have a child after worshipping God. It goes without saying that as time has passed, all of these Bhil societal traditions have changed. A modernised way of life has emerged in social life as a result of the progress of education, especially among the younger generation, which has replaced many traditional social cultures and traditions with the modernised one. This has resulted in a dramatic shift in the community's entire social life.

4. MARRIAGE:

Marriage is an important component of the Bhil culture. They hold the belief that everything exists in pairs, just like the sun and the moon, so their meeting is one of life's lucky moments. For girls, the average age of marriage is 12 to 16 years, while for boys, it is 12 to 18 years. They accept arranged marriages as well as romantic relationships. In the event of an arranged marriage, the groom would visit the bride's home and exchange vows in front of the Nag deity. The elders in their community perform the marriage rather than a priest. When a couple falls in love, the boy and the girl flee the home. After spending a few months together, they travel to the village. The boy is now required to pay the bride's parents the specified sum of money. There are situations when it may be more than one lakh rupees. The villagers resolve the conflict by themselves. Child marriage is still common boys typically marry when they are 12 years old at the parents' request. They warned that if they didn't provide them as brides, they would flee with any girl from the village. The Bhil don't wed within their own clan. Separation is acceptable in Bhil community, and polygamy is also socially acceptable. They follow specific customs when a child is born. Male children are not preferred more than female children. Marriage by exchange means ones sister exchange to each other. The poor Bhils perform such type of marriage. In this the bride price is not paid by both sides. Widow marriage is also prevalent among the Bhils. It is performed in simple manner. Nata marriage, in this case Bhil women can marry any person she likes but she need to pay the price of the bride

Food Habits: The diet of the Bhils primarily consists of cereals and pulses. The maize is the staple food of the Bhils in Madhya Pradesh. They take three times maize chapatti in their meal. One third of the doe is made of wheat flour and rest is maize flour. One of their most favourite food is, "PANIYA" this is also made out of maize flour. The does is prepared and sandwiched in the broad leaf of Palash locally termed as 'butea', and baked on the open fire and it is eaten with pulses or dal. Dal paniya is often prepared by them during any festival or family function. Milk was not consumed at that level though they domesticated cattle, it was restricted only among the children. The earthen chulha (Clay stove) are usually made in the huts and wood is brought from the hill for fuel when they go for to rear their cattle they bring it with them. Usually they eat only twice a day, breakfast is prepared early morning and wrapped in clean cloth kept in the bamboo basket and hung in the thatched roof of the hut. When the children feel hungry they take and eat from the basket. The adults take the food to their work place or agri filed. The second meal is prepared in the early evening before 7 p.m. Rice is prepared occasionally by them it is considered as rich persons food. They are vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian group of people in the village. The vegetarian are referred as Bhagat they have 3 flags white, green and red in front of the house to indicate. They don't even consume alcohol but sometime they do smoke bidi. The non-vegetarian group of people eat goat, hens, rats and rabbits. They consume alcohol along the meat occasionally. Drinking of indigenous liquor, "Mahua", is a popular practice among the Bhills. Mahua was prepared by themselves in some of the houses of the village. Though alcoholism was common among men but women only consumed during the village festivals or marriage. Mahua was considered as sacred also some time offered to village god. Thus, Maize chapatti, Dal-Bhatti and Dal-Paniya are the traditional dishes apart from Puri and Khir.

5. FESTIVALS:

Akavijaya: Every year in April, tribes celebrate the New Year with festivities known as Akavijaya. They purchase new clothing for the house's small children and cook a variety of meals for the entire family.

Baneshwar fair: It is observed as the Bhils' principal holiday. This fair, which occurs during the Shivatri season, honours the Baneshwar Mahadev, popularly known as Lord Shiva (in January or February). On this occasion, Bhils gather and establish camps along the Som and Mahi rivers' banks. They sing and dance to age-old songs while gathered around the fire. At the Lakshmi Narayan temple at night, they all take part in the raslila. The main draws of the fair include cultural performances, magic displays, animal exhibits, and a feast of gymnastics. In reality, this fair is a merger of two others, one of which is held in celebration of Lord Shiva and the other of which was started after Jankunwari built the Vishnu temple.

Makar Sankranti: This holiday is observed in January. On this day, they traditionally consume sesame seeds with sugarcane jaggery in the form of teelpapri. On this day, they traditionally consume sesame (Til) with sugarcane jaggery in the form of tilpapri.

MahaShivratri: On this day, people perform poojas for the god Shiva both at home and in temples. Men and women both observe fasts on this day. Also, they celebrate Shivratri and hold a 2-day Fair ceremony close to the village temple.

Holi: Holi is usually celebrated in March. Holi is a celebration of colour. People used to celebrate Holi to play with colour, enjoy festivals, and usher in the Hindu New Year.

Akhateej: It is their local holiday, and on this day, the women fasted and offered Puja to their god in hopes of lengthening their husbands' lives.

Rakshabandhan: On the Sawan Purnima in the month of August, this festival is observed. Sister ties a ribbon (Rakhi) on her brother's ankle on this day to ensure his safety.

Druga Puja: In the month of October, Druga Puja is observed. They regularly performed Ambeemaa worship within their home. On Demon's victory, it is celebrated. This region celebrates this holiday during a 10-day period.

6. LIVELIHOOD:

The Bhils' primary source of income is agriculture. Cotton is grown extensively in this region. They live in the Ratlam region, which has black soil suitable for cultivating cotton and soybean. Their ancestors taught them the farming techniques. Even though the soil is uneven and filled with stones, they are indeed able to produce the most. The entire tribal family contributes equally to the family's survival. A small herd of cattle, comprising cows, goats, and bulls, is kept by every family. The animals are usually taken by the youngsters to let them graze. They are well-trained for hill climbing. In addition to farming, they also perform agricultural labour on other people's fields. With the aid of contractors or middlemen, they are engaged for agricultural labour. After subtracting 30 to 50 rupees as the service, the contractor pays their wages once a week. Without hiring workers, farming activities are impossible for a single household. Currently, men and women receive Rs 200 at the end of the day as a fair salary. Goats are referred to as the poor man's cow. The goat is sold to small shops or the Sailana area's livestock market. They sell the goat in case of any emergency situation arises in the family like any sickness or festivals. Usually, the children of the family takes care of the goat.

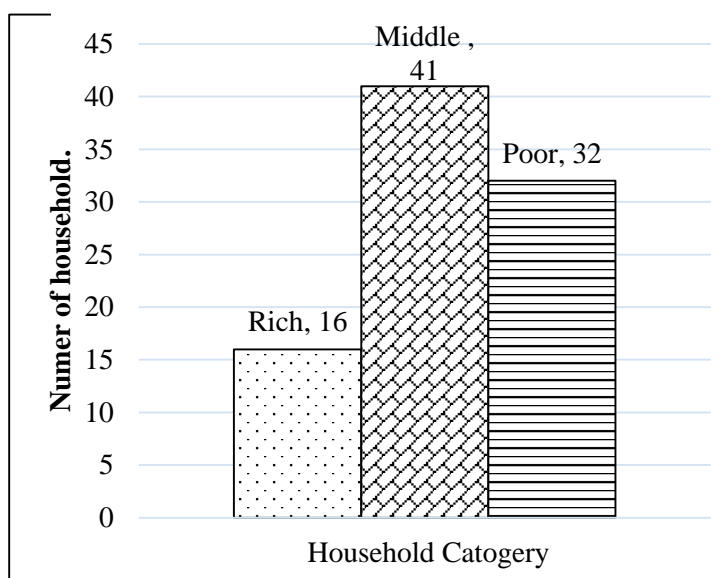
7. ECONOMICAL:

To understand the economic condition of the village the wealth ranking was conducted in the villages. It was a difficult task to set criteria the task was carried out by the community. It took 2 days for make them understand about the method and purpose of wealth ranking. Then they divide the villages' five economic conditions and place the village households in their respective classes. The economic conditions are given below.

Table 1 Criteria set by the community.

Financial Status	Criteria set by the community.
Rich	More than 10 bigha land/ Govt. Job/ Tractor/Rs.8000-10000 per capita income/Self Dependent
Middle	5to10 Bigha land/ Bike/ 5000-7000 per capita income/ Own agricultural Land
Poor	3-5 Bigha land/ Own agricultural land/ labor work/ Cycle/ 3000-5000 per capita income

Chart 1 Family categorization



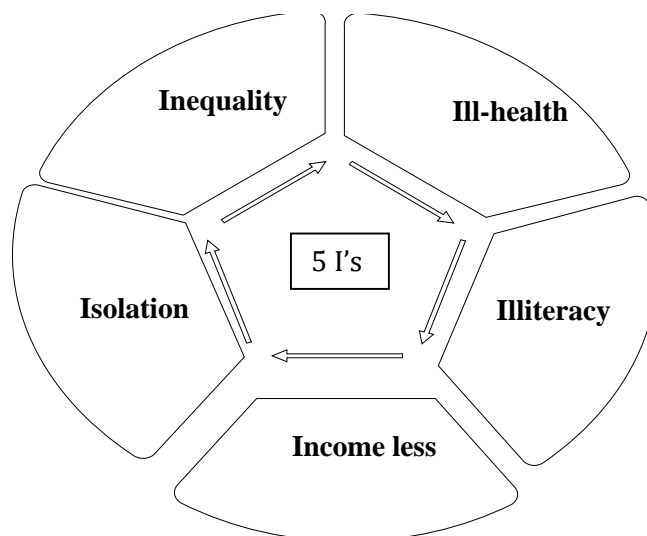
In the Salrapda village where the study was carried out from the wealth ranking exercise carried out with the criteria set by the community member themselves. The number of rich family was 16, 41 family were from the middle class and 18 were from the poor family.

Poverty using framework: A framework known as the "5 i's of poverty" is used to outline the various aspects of poverty. It is known as the "5 i's" because it includes five components that are thought to be crucial for comprehending and resolving poverty. The framework was created by numerous organisations and academics with expertise in poverty reduction, and policymakers, practitioners, and researchers have utilised it extensively as a tool for analysing and treating poverty.

Ill-health There is no primary health care unit in the village. Underweight kids – proper diet is not provided to the pregnant mothers, hence underweight kids are born. Women health problem, Women have to go for womb removal process which is very cruel act. They need to do so that they can go for work daily. Cataract problem are in the elderly people those who are more than 40. They get their treatment in the hospital at Ratlam 35 km away free of cost.

Illiteracy Apparently, the school administration was silent. It was found that only 8-9 students came to school out of the 35 students enrolled in class. In the case of girls, they drop out because they either marry or become involved in household activities. As the school in the hamlet only goes up to the eighth grade. **Income less** Seasonal jobs with lower pay leave workers unemployed after the harvesting and sowing seasons; they work for just around 20 days per season. MGNREGA is unsuccessful in providing work due to unemployment. Additionally, the money transfer is unfair. Due to a data error, money has gone into another account. Often money was not credited in the person's account who has really worked in MGNREGA.

Figure 2 , 5 I's of Poverty Framework



Isolation: Obtaining employment is difficult in the village because of its distance from the main town. As, education opportunity can be challenging to regularly attend school there because it is far from Ratlam, the main town where one can get good education facilities.

Inequality Pay disparity for the same work. Despite doing more work than males, women receive lower pay. Boys can pursue higher education if they so choose, but girls are not permitted.

Indigenous Financial system “Nyotra”:

Nyotra is one of the best practice among the Bhils Madhya Pradesh (MP). Nyotra is usually organised in the months of October to November to April. It was found during the discussion that Nyotra system was started even before India's Independence. In this financial system a family discusses with their relative and finalizes a date, on the specified date he organizes a feast in his home and invites all his relatives and neighbors. They come to enjoy the feast and give a sum of money ranging from Rs 100 to Rs 1000 to the family. The host family keeps the record of the Nyotra received from the guest. The money is used for doing any business, marriage or buying any asset for their family. This Nyotra is done in the interval of every three years. The families who came for the Nyotra as guests also organize Nyotra at their home, then they need to return the same amount to that family with or without interest. Though there is a slight decline in this system it is a unique practice of self-help among the Bhil community.

Panchayat

The tribal group has a strong social organization known as Jati Panchayat. The similar organization pattern has been followed throughout the Bhil region of the country. They obey the decision of their panchayat. The panchayat generally gives economical punishments. In Bhil panchayat the local disputes are generally solved in their panchayat viz. marriage, land and other criminal disputes. After the amendment in the Panchayati Raj act the village panchayats have more power and the effect of Bhil panchayat has reduced. The social structure of the Bhil tribe, an indigenous group in Madhya Pradesh, is significantly influenced by their active political life. In addition to Semalkhera, Bhatkheri, and Patdi villages, which have a combined population of 2870, Salrapada village is a component of the Salrapada panchayat. After Mr. Udaylal Dodiya's ten-year service as village chief of Salrapada village, Prakesh Mahida was recently appointed. This change in leadership is anticipated to have an effect on the Madhya Pradesh Bhil tribe as a whole, in addition to the political environment in Salrapada. Political representation is essential to guarantee the welfare and protection of the rights of the Bhil tribe, which has historically been marginalized and subject to discrimination. In order to strengthen the Bhil tribe and give them a voice in political decision-making processes, the appointment of community leaders like Prakesh Mahida is a positive start.

8. CONCLUSION:

Participatory research techniques were used to gather unbiased data as the study investigated the social systems and structures of a particular tribe. According to the research, the tribe is made up solely of Schedule Tribes of the ethnic Bhil, who have eight clans each with their own set of gods. They support planned and romantic partnerships and view

marriage as an integral part of their culture, yet child marriage is still very common. The Bhils consume a lot of cereals and pulses and are mostly vegetarians, though non-vegetarianism is tolerated in the culture. Due to the education of the younger generation, many traditional traditions and practises have been supplanted by a contemporary way of life. These results shed light on the social structures and cultural diversity of the Bhil tribe, emphasising the necessity of preserving their cultural legacy while still embracing modernity. The key development issues were lack of quality education, early marriage, unemployment and connectivity.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS:

After observation some suggestions can be given that:

- Farmer Producer Organised by and development institution as it is the need of the hour for the farmer cultivating cotton.
- Some skill based training must be given as there is no alternative source of livelihood apart of from agriculture.
- Migration, Illiteracy and alcoholism are the key development issues that need to be addressed as soon as possible.
- Some steps should be taken to ensure better health of women by prohibiting child marriage in this region.

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